

Multiculturalism: The Organization of Cultural and Racial Diversity in Canadian Society

Paper presented at the
Seventh Annual Intercultural and International
Communication Conference

Miami, Florida
February 22 - 24, 1990

"Imagining difference (which of course does not mean making it up, but making it evident) remains a science of which we all have need" (Geertz 1986: 120).

Lorna Roth
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec
February 23, 1990

Introduction

Canada is no stranger to ethnocultural¹ and racial diversity. It has always been composed of a plurality of linguistic, aboriginal, and ethnocultural communities and dual sets of institutions at the federal and provincial levels (Armour 1981). Recent demographic records (between 1961 and 1988) indicate shifts in the ethnocultural and visible/audible minority population to have increased from 8 percent in 1961 to 37.5 percent in 1986 (Dutt 1988: 1). The impact of these immigration figures on the rearrangement of government policy considerations regarding the equitable apportioning of symbolic and material resources to the Canadian population has been profound. The influx of immigrants, in light of Canada's aging population and declining birth rates (Ibid.), has precipitated a re-evaluation of traditional bicultural and national identity conflicts and resolutions. Cross-cultural communications issues have become central challenges to government policy-makers and nationalists. Indeed, it is presently recognized that post-World War II immigration has produced many unpredictable and new social, political, and cultural formations in Canada which have rendered orthodox approaches to issues of toleration and ethnocultural relations outdated. We are living through interesting times in Canada as we experience a fundamental change in the conceptualization of our national identity from a bilingual/bicultural country to that of a multicultural nation.²

In Canada, the term "multiculturalism" is used in three senses: as a government policy, as a political ideology of cultural pluralism underpinning the federal policy, and in reference to the "social reality" of an ethnically diverse society (Kallen 1982: 51).

As a strategic approach to cultural pluralism and toleration, as well as a set of policy principles, structures, and social possibilities, multiculturalism has become an important site for studying the ways in which "ethnic and racial differences" have been used to organize social and political frameworks and practices within Canadian society. Ethnocultural difference, for example, is the critical factor which organizes the distinctions between three sets of claims put forth by Canadian constituencies: the rights of aboriginal or pre-

Canadian societies, those native peoples whose territorial residence on this continent preceded that of the Europeans; the Canadians/Canadiens-Canadiennes who claim their citizenship rights as national communities; and the rights of immigrant populations who search for ways in which to "preserve some of their non-Canadian ways, as befits the Canadian commitment to a cultural mosaic" (Dinorcia 1984: 148 - 149). These claims have recently been inserted into the Canadian broadcasting system through the establishment of separate policies for ethnic (1985) and aboriginal broadcasting undertakings (1981), each of which acknowledges the inherent differences between the two groups and the "founding peoples" of the Canadian state.

This paper focusses on the distinct ways in which Canadian multiculturalism and ethnic broadcasting are linked together through common sets of assumptions about cultural and racial diversity - that cultural and racial origin is visible and audible, that selected traditions can be preserved and expressed through dedicated projects and programming, and that it must be explained to others in order to develop the kind of tolerance that a democratic pluralist population "should" demonstrate. Because aboriginal broadcasting undertakings are distinguished from those of ethnic media and constitute a separate case study, I have limited my discussions in this paper to that of ethnic broadcasting.³

The multiculturalism policy of 1971, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Bill C-93, Chapter 31: 1988), the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), other supporting legislation (the Official Languages Act, the Citizenship Act, and the Canadian Human Rights Act) and the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy (1985) have provided the broader legislative and policy bases for the management of Canadian cultural and racial pluralism. These legislative frameworks circumscribe particular representations of "otherness" and have specific (though not necessarily predictable) effects in shaping the Canadian public's notions about cultural diversity and tolerance. Does multiculturalism policy and legislation enable and set limits on the public rendering of cultural and racial differences in Canadian society? What is the role of Canadian broadcasting policy in constructing public notions of cultural pluralism? Should multiculturalism be read as a statement about the Canadian state's theory of ethnic and racial toleration?

In this essay, I shall demonstrate that the multicultural and ethnic broadcasting policies each represent political interventions into socio-cultural

and market structures that have previously barred visible and audible minorities and even white ethnic peoples from easy entry. In effect, these government interventions have restructured the conditions of possibility for employment equity and affirmative action programs for racial and cultural minorities in Canada.⁴ Canadian institutional and regulatory systems are furthermore linked together in the form of cultural and economic regulation. I argue this because I believe that multiculturalism and ethnic broadcasting policies can both be seen as economic indicators of the kinds of "ethnicity" projects the federal government considers worthy of funding or licensing to recognize, improve, and "produce" understanding of cultural differences and levels of tolerance in Canadian society.

By culturally and economically regulating both the social and communications systems, the Canadian administrative apparatus, in effect, has managed both to streamline and reduce the complexity of the debates on cultural diversity as well as open new controlled-access avenues for the public expression of ethnicity. In other words, the Canadian government has constructed a formal paradigm of ethnic diversity and toleration with all its limiting and enabling possibilities. This paper provides a historical overview of the Canadian multiculturalism paradigm and situates recent ethnic broadcasting practices within its context.

History and Perceptions of Canadian Multiculturalism

Former Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's impetus to promote and announce a policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (October 8, 1971) was the outcome of a series of highly charged debates and a negative response on the part of immigrant ethnic minorities surrounding the submission of the reports of a Royal Commission study on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960's (which hereafter will be referred to as the "Bi and Bi" Commission). Organized because of the growing dissatisfaction and friction between the English and the French, the "Bi and Bi" Commission had been mandated to examine the state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend "the steps to be taken to develop an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the

contribution made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution" (Multiculturalism Canada: 1984: 8). Ten members of the Commission organized and travelled to 23 regional meetings to hear briefs and opinions and to hold public discussions.

Initial deliberations about multiculturalism polarized the Canadian public. In the sixties, reacting to the possibility of being relegated third-class citizens, spokespersons for the ethnocultural and racial communities, led by the Ukrainians of Alberta, demanded equal status to that of the "founding fathers" (Kallen 1982: 53). In their preliminary report (1965), the "Bi and Bi" commissioners outlined some of the reasons for the ethnic public's support of Multiculturalism. Ethnic groups, the report states, talked of their fears of being left out of the French and English dialogue, affirmed their sense of the historical importance of the "third" force in the development of Canadian society, and advocated a pluralistic, "mosaic" approach to the construction of a multicultural society. Speaking of "unity in diversity", they argued for "the harmonious co-operation of all ethnic groups in the Canadian country as a whole" (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism 1965: 52). Few ethnic groups objected to Multiculturalism as an idea. Those who did expressed concern about "balkanization" and repeatedly argued for the idea of "One Canada" (Ibid.: 52-53).

Pierre Elliott Trudeau supported multiculturalism, but was a strong believer in bilingualism and not multilingualism as an official policy. He argued that Canada could become "a special place, and a stronger place as well. . . We become less like others; we become less susceptible to cultural, social, or political envelopment by others" (Porter 1987: 119). To those who protested that multiculturalism would be divisive, "that the demands of certain ethnic groups" would "make the fundamental duality of the country more difficult", and to the Premier of Québec, Robert Bourassa who specifically stated,

**Je veux souligner que pour la communauté canadienne-française, cette nouvelle politique multiculturelle représente un immense pas en arrière dont, je crois, les Canadiens français n'ont pas encour pris conscience (Ibid.: 155).
[I want to underline that for the French-Canadian community, the new multiculturalism policy represents an immense step backward which, I believe,**

has not yet been grasped by the French-Canadians."] (Author's translation)

Trudeau answered with the opposite view "that strong ethnic loyalties would be integrative" (Ibid.: 118 -119) and that each "of the many fibres contributes its own qualities" to strengthen Canada (Ibid.: 119).

Still, many French and English Canadians worried that "multiculturalism in some provinces would be more likely to promote a bilingualism in the form of Anglo-Ukrainian or Franco-Italian rather than English-French bilingualism, which had basic sociological and historical links and which, it was believed, was so important for the future of Canada as a viable society (Ibid.: 118). Others were concerned that some ethnic organizations and cultural communities would be more interested in promoting their own cultures than in sharing their cultures with other Canadians. "Because of that, the program could become a multi-unicultural one" (Ibid.: 120).

John Porter, author of **The Vertical Mosaic** (1965), opposed multiculturalism on the grounds that it would:

. . . foster ethnic separation, enclavement and retention of traditional values. Ethnic particularism, in turn, perpetuates the vertical (ethnic) mosaic by creating barriers to upward mobility in post-industrial society which is predicated on universalistic norms. In this view, government encouragement of ethnic diversity legitimates the proliferation of particularistic value differences among Canadians and thus impedes the development of national unity (Kallen 1982: 54).

Two more recent essays by John Porter in his book **The Measure of Canadian Society** are particularly informative and critical of multiculturalism and of the census data on Canadian ethnicity. Porter, one of the few authors who has consistently opposed multiculturalism (the other being Keith Spicer, the present Chairman of the Canadian Radio Television-Telecommunications Commission - the Canadian broadcasting regulatory agency, who opposes the funding of multiculturalism), does so on the grounds that it may "generate hostilities and shift loyalties from the larger national entities . . . which are the principal instruments by which some measures of a

stable international order can be maintained and humanity as a whole can be served" (Porter 1987: 104).

Other Canadians have protested against multiculturalism on the grounds that the division of the population into categories based on ethnicity would endorse and reinforce the "age-old Colonial technique of divide and rule utilized by majority ethnic elites to guarantee and perpetuate their ascendancy" (Ibid.). The following is a summary of some of the other key concerns expressed about multiculturalism policy: a) that the implementation of the policy might indicate a contradiction between policy rhetoric and practice; b) that there **are** no relevant cultural differences among Canada's immigrant populations other than minor distinctions in cultural taste; c) that the policy would be one of containment and appeasement of the conflicting demands made by the non-English and the Québécois; and d) that the "policy served as a technique of domination which legitimated the entrenched powers of the ruling Anglo elite when its superordinate, national position was threatened by Quebec's claim to political power, on the one hand, and by the growing numerical and economic strength and increasing cultural vitality of immigrant ethnic collectivities, on the other hand" (Kallen 1982: 54 - 55).

In 1969, Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: **The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups** was published in which 16 recommendations for the implementation of an official government policy of multilingualism and multiculturalism were advocated as a means of integrating immigrant ethnic collectivities (Ibid.). The Commission members did stipulate, however, that there are "many ways to preserve and reinforce the other cultures in Canada" (Multiculturalism Canada 1984: 8).

In responding to the Commission's report, Trudeau elaborated the official declaration of a Canadian multiculturalism policy in 1971, but made it clear in his speech that in his and the government's view, language and culture were to be regarded as divisible. Instead of the proposed multicultural and multilingual policy as outlined in Book IV of the 'Bi and Bi' Commission report, Trudeau promoted a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. The Prime Minister then proceeded to gain support from the House of Commons for the policy recommendations, obtained it, and although the new "Multiculturalism policy within a bilingual framework" was not to be enshrined in the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** until 1982

and the **Multiculturalism Act** in 1988, Canada became the first and only state in the world to have an explicit and formal policy framework as a guide for the construction of cultural and racial diversity. Trudeau considered this new policy "the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians" (Porter 1987: 118).

The 1971 policy principles indicated that the government would provide support for the implementation process in four ways:

1. "Resources permitting, it would seek to assist all Canadian cultural groups that had demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and a clear need for assistance;
2. It would assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society;
3. It would promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity; and
4. It would continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (Multiculturalism Canada 1984: 8).

The cultural freedom of the Canadian citizen to display his/her ethnicity publicly was to Trudeau something of a voluntary nature.

The Prime Minister emphasized the fact that under the newly-introduced policy the preservation of ethnic identity is a voluntary matter, both for the individual and for the group. The funding of multicultural programmes would therefore be directed only towards those ethnic groups whose members express a desire to maintain their ethnocultural heritage and who can demonstrate a need for support in their efforts to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness. Similarly, Mr. Trudeau recognized the right of each individual to be free to choose whether or not to maintain his or her distinctive ethnic identity (Kallen 1982: 53).

The emphasis on ethnic expressivity in the first 1971 policy objective has come under sharp criticism by Canadian scholars, especially in relation to the promotion of ethno-exotica (Peter 1979; Bullivant 1981 in Kallen 1982).

Bullivant criticizes the expressive function of ethnicity as deflecting attention away from the instrumental side of political and economic survival through structural assimilation (Kallen 1982: 55). Peter argues that it places ethnic groups in a position of contributing quaint customs and primordial identities to the Canadian mosaic, while simultaneously denying them access to political and economic opportunities (Ibid.).⁵

Despite the articulation of these relevant protests, the policy has been actively implemented since 1971 and has recently (1988) become enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act with additional protections against racial discrimination. In 1972, a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed with the mandate of promoting Multiculturalism through active communications with all sectors of the government and public (Hudson 1987: 65). That same year, a Multiculturalism Directorate was named within the Department of the Secretary of State. Like the Minister, the Directorate was to assist in the "full realization of the multicultural nature of Canadian society through programs that promote the preservation and sharing of cultural heritages, and which facilitate mutual appreciation and understanding among all Canadians" (Ibid.). A year later, the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was established as an advisory body to the Minister. This Council is still operational in 1990.

With regard to state expenditure, paltry amounts are spent on multiculturalism. In 1985 - 86, for example, the Multiculturalism Branch of the Department of Secretary of State had a budget of \$24. million, accounting for about \$1. out of every \$4,000. spent by Ottawa (Brooks 1989: 292).

This money is divided among a number of uses, including annual funding for national ethnocultural organizations, the establishment and operation of multicultural associations, centres, and events, language and other instruction for immigrants, language instruction in heritage-language programs administered by some provinces, support for university teaching and research in ethnic studies, assistance to ethnic writers, publishers, and the performing and visual arts, and advertising to promote popular acceptance of ethnic and racial diversity. The fact that final approval of all grants administered under Ottawa's Multiculturalism Program lies with cabinet, instead of with an independent agency as is the case with most other areas of cultural

support, leaves open the possibility that funding decisions may be influenced by partisan considerations. Even in the absence of obvious political interference, it is clear that the existing system of funding ethnocultural organizations and activities contains a built-in bias toward established ethnic organizations that have received funding in the past and toward those groups that are the most articulate and well organized (Ibid.).

More recently (1987 - 1988), the Multiculturalism budget has increased to 25.9 million dollars (Secretary of State 1987-1988: 25).

There are also hidden state investments involved in the promotion of multiculturalism in Canada, ie., those not directly disseminated through the Department of Multiculturalism. These include monies spent by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board of Canada, and the National Museum of Civilization, all of which produce some (though few) programs and/or exhibits reflecting ethnocultural and racial diversity in one of the two official languages of Canada. This has the effect of making cultural information more widely accessible, but often at the cost of (re)presenting diversity as eccentricity or as a curiosity (Ibid.).

Relevant Multiculturalism Legislation

Since the sixties, the federal government had been pressured to establish "equal rights" policies and legislation in support of the changed demographic profile of Canadian society. With one in three Canadians of non-British, non-French, or non-aboriginal descent by the early eighties, the federal government eventually responded by enshrining guarantees of cultural and racial pluralism in legislation through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Sections 15 and 27, and the Multiculturalism Act (Bill C-93 passed on 21st July, 1988).

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), Section 15, specifies equality rights for all citizens before and under the law - without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. Section 27 stipulates that the Charter itself is to "be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians".

Linked with three other relevant pieces of Canadian legislation, the **Official Languages Act**, the **Citizenship Act**, and the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, as well as two international agreements, the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, the **Canadian Multiculturalism Act** essentially covers two broad areas. From a political and legal perspective, the most important guarantees it establishes are: a) the "full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society" and assistance to eliminate "any barrier to such participation" (Bill C-93, C.31, 3[1][c]); b) the assurance of "equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity" (Ibid.: 3[1][e]); and c) "equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement" in all federal institutions for "Canadians of all origins" (Ibid.: 3[2][a]).

From a cultural and racial perspective, it recognizes and promotes a) "the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (Ibid.: 3[1][a]; b) the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future (Ibid.: 3[1][b]; c) the existence and enhancement of the diversity of Canadian cultural and racial communities "and their historic contribution to Canadian society" (Ibid.: 3[1][d]; d) "the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins" (Ibid.: 3[1][g]; e) "the appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and . . . the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures" (Ibid.: 3[1][h]; and finally f) the preservation and enhancement of "the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada" (Ibid.: 3[1][i].

While the Multiculturalism Act may be superficially interpreted as a promotional tool, it has wide implications on a deeper level, the most important being that of employment equity (C.31, 3 [2]), which calls for structural and institutional assimilation of ethnocultural, aboriginal, and visible

minorities across and within all federal agencies, Crown Corporations, and federally-contracted institutions and businesses. Of these institutional applications, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act has considerable significance regarding the participation of aboriginal, ethnocultural and visible minorities (visible and audible) within all individual federally-regulated broadcasting undertakings and within the overall structuring of the Canadian broadcasting system itself.

The recent Multiculturalism Act (1988) has gone further than the 1971 policy in facilitating these changes at institutional levels. It has done this by providing material benefits in the form of anti-racist legislation and employment equity / affirmative action for visible minorities. The emphasis in the 1988 Act is less on symbolic ethnicity than on removing the barriers to equal participation in the social and economic spheres. Legislatively, the Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race in such areas as accomodation and employment, but this does not address the underlying attitudinal basis that causes such behaviour.

The pervasiveness of racism in grosser or subtler forms in societies across the world suggests that such attitudes are not easily changed and that public spending on media campaigns to promote racial harmony probably has only a marginal impact at most (Brooks 1989: 294).

If this is a valid statement, as this and other evidence (Kotler 1982) suggests it might very well be, then by what further means can the Canadian government and the cultural communities hope to move toward a society which exemplifies multiculturalism's slogan of "unity in diversity"? One way in which the federal government and the cultural communities are beginning to grapple with the challenge of racial harmony in Canada is by going beyond ad hoc media campaigns toward the establishment and encouragement of ethnic-controlled broadcasting institutions, structures, and practices. By more accurately representing and exposing ethnicity on broadcasting channels, it is assumed that the possibilities for more effective intercultural communications will emerge.

The Ethnic Broadcasting Policy

The **Broadcasting Policy Reflecting Canada's Linguistic and Cultural Diversity**, more commonly referred to as the "Ethnic Broadcasting Policy" is a uniquely Canadian initiative and, to date, is the only official Multicultural broadcasting policy internationally. Although it was established in 1985, and has opened the way to some local and regional undertakings, such as Multicultural Television in Ontario, Latinovision operating out of Toronto, Chinavision, located in Vancouver, and an independent production unit in Montreal, Télévision Ethnique du Québec, which broadcasts over the regional ethnic cable channel, details of its actual implementation on a national basis, with private and public broadcasters are still in the process of being debated and clarified.

Like most policies, the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy was a posthoc phenomena. By this, I mean that its formalization was preceded by the establishment of all the presently-existing ethnic stations organized under the initiatives of private entrepreneurs. Since the licensing of CFMB radio Montreal in 1959, eleven other ethnic broadcasting undertakings (8 radio stations and 4 television stations in all) have been structured into the Canadian system, three of which existed well before the announcement of the Multiculturalism policy in 1971. The nine others began operations before the CRTC (Canadian Radio - Television / Tele-communications Commission) had its ethnic broadcasting hearings. To date, most ethnic broadcasting undertakings have been urban-based, privately funded, commercially-oriented and multilingual.

Since the sixties, Canada's multicultural populations have been active politically, socially, or culturally. They have strategically lobbied with the CRTC, the Department(s) of Communications (federal and provincial) and marketed their approaches and ideas within the context of public media forums and conferences. In their struggle to legislatively enshrine the right to **receive** and **transmit** an ethnically balanced depiction of Canadian society within public and private broadcasting, ethnic minority groups have identified common grounds for the production of local, regional, and sometimes tradition-oriented cultural programming. They have demanded cultural and artistic justice, the redistribution of broadcasting powers and transmitter access, and have called for cognitive equity in all forms of visible and audible portrayals of themselves, Canada's "Others".

Canada's multicultural communities have argued for improved ethnic/visible minority representation on mainstream and specialized, national and regional broadcasting services at all levels - technical, administrative, cultural, and in policy-making processes. Some have proposed that ethnicity should not be defined as broadcasting content at all, but rather that all persons should be considered for a wider variety of mainstream broadcasting roles without regard for skin colour, ethnic origin or audible minority status (Canadian Multiculturalism Council 1988: 53 - 58). Affirmative action and employment equity programs have also been strongly advocated. To date, a minimum of broadcasting institutions with 100 or more employees have begun to implement employment equity programs.⁶

At the actual ethnic broadcasting hearings in 1984, the Canadian Radio Television-Telecommunications Commission heard representations from intervenors which emphasized that fair, balanced and non-stereotyped ethnic programming should: "serve as a bridge to enable groups to overcome cultural barriers; increase access by ethnic groups to conventional radio and television and to cable services; foster cultural appreciation and promote encounters among all Canadian cultural groups; and assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages" (CRTC 1985-139: 6 - 7). Stated objectives for ethnic programming are easily comparable to those of the Multiculturalism Act.

The Broadcasting Policy Reflecting Canada's Linguistic and Cultural Diversity itself is technical in tone and somewhat statistical in its definitions of what an ethnic program and station are. Culture and heritage language are structured into the policy in terms of minimum and maximum percentages which, for administrative purposes, differentiates an ethnic from a conventional broadcasting undertaking by its supposed measurability.

There are at least two outstanding problematic issues in regard to the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy in Canada at the present time. First, there are insufficient amounts of original high-quality ethnic-language programming produced in Canada because there is very little funding available for such endeavors. In response to economic constraints, the practice of brokerage has sprung up. This refers to the purchase of blocks of radio and television time by independent ethnic producers who "determine the program content and commercial messages and derive revenues from the advertising contained therein" (CRTC 1983-139: 30-31). Brokerage is a problem for two

reasons. According to CRTC regulations, all licensees are responsible for the content that is broadcast under their auspices. Should the licensee not be able to understand third- language programming, then there is a question as to who will be responsible for potentially libelous statements. The Commission's response to this question is that a self-regulated industry code for programming brokerage be established to address this aspect of the brokerage issue. The other reason that brokerage structures are problematic pertains to the question of Canadian content quotas. Can international programming, for example, be considered Canadian if shown over an ethnic station? If it can, then is this not an expanded and somewhat distorted notion of what Canadian content is? For example, what is Canadian about Italian-language programming produced in Italy and imported for broadcasting purposes? This is still an unresolved problem for ethnic broadcasters and for the CRTC which has permitted the broadcasting of international programming (as a stopgap measure) until such time as a viable ethnic program production industry takes hold in Canada.

The second pertinent issue about ethnic broadcasting and the policy itself is that due to scarcity of available frequencies in ethnic market areas, the CRTC has chosen **not** to license single-language undertakings. The lack of opportunity to address a homogeneous audience is theoretically and empirically understandable to the broadcasters, but has been problematic in practical application because it requires that each potential licensee negotiate a fair and balanced ethnic representation of languages (and cultures) within each station, sometimes with great difficulty.

The compulsory multilingual factor makes the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy and the Multiculturalism Act implementation process comparable in complexity and macro-difficulties. The challenge of constructing and marketing the idea of a multicultural society, and an ethnically-balanced media system characterized by "unity in diversity" in a society dominated by French and English institutions can be almost overwhelming. Much of the backroom social construction process remains invisible in order for the appearance of multiculturalism to be presented as a *fait accompli*. For this reason, the ethnic broadcasting case is an important site for further critical analysis. Moreover, the collection of longitudinal data on how the ethnic broadcasting policy implementation process plays itself out historically may

have useful applications in other domains relating to the construction of culturally and racially diverse activities and services in Canada and elsewhere.

Concluding Comments

In this essay, I have tried to show how multiculturalism policies / legislation and ethnic broadcasting are strategic tools for organizing cultural and racial pluralism in Canadian society. As a means for the federal government to symbolically demonstrate its approach to Canada's changed demographic profile, multiculturalism may be perceived as a paradigm of state intervention which supports the public production, programming, and protection of ethnicity and provides the basis for employment equity legislation in Canada.

Through the realignment of the social subject in legislation, the government has attempted to demonstrate its political will to approach matters of cultural and racial diversity with fairness and with an awareness of the need to develop a form of toleration that is visible and that will set a public example. On the other hand, media promotional strategies for multiculturalism and the specific ways in which the federal government practices its policy through the dissemination of social project monies and broadcasting licenses have resulted in narrowing the terms of the social and political debates about other possible relationships between bilingualism, biculturalism, and ethnic/racial diversity. It does this by restricting multiculturalism and ethnic broadcasting program structures to a range of very precise objectives and criteria which have to be met in order for groups to qualify for continued funding and/or license renewals. This being the case, groups focus on competing for limited resources and become dependent on government programs and regulations to continue their own mandates. "ethnic professionals" who function as mediators of the two sets of lived experiences - those of the bureaucrats and those of the ethnocultural and visible minority populations - soon come into existence to assure that, at least bureaucratically, the organization of cultural and racial diversity in Canada meets the standards established by the federal civil service.

Aside from its organizational aspects, the concept and empirical site of

Canadian multiculturalism implies a theory of cultural difference and stratification. It is my contention that multiculturalism policy-makers, in essence, have taken the notion of inequality and appropriated it in the name of "difference". In a signifying chain which constructs national identity through the categories of ethnicity and race, multiculturalism has shifted the meaning of "inequality" to mean "difference" and thus reframed a negative term to a more positive one. As Stuart Hall explains in his essay **Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates**,

A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rupture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or re-articulating its associations, for example, from the negative to the positive. Often, ideological struggle actually consists of attempting to win some new set of meanings for an existing term or category, of dis-articulating it from its place in a signifying structure (Hall 1985: 112).

In the case of Canada during the sixties, the cultural communities on the front lines were able to partially win political recognition on their terms [they ended up with multiculturalism though not multilingualism as the official policy] and did eventually gain a commitment to employment equity and affirmative action programs. Multiculturalism brought marginalized communities out of their private enclaves into a societal community in which presumably all ethnic peoples could participate equally and without discrimination. But, as important, the cultural communities won a new set of meanings for ethnicity and cultural/racial diversity in their battle for acknowledgement with the federal government.

The formation of multiculturalism policy and its subsequent popularization within the public sphere has acted over time to challenge other discursive positions within Canadian society. For example, as an intellectual idea, multiculturalism has intervened in the bipolar thinking implicit in national debates about bilingualism and biculturalism and has problematized prior Canadian historical narratives.

The recognition in multiculturalism that (ethno)cultural knowledge(s) of a local, regional, national, or international nature may, through population migration, be transported from one territorial location to another has privileged "difference" as a key problem in the development of Canadian society. Permitting public utterances of "other" perspectives and positions, multiculturalism discourses and debates about the meanings and representations of ethnicity in a technological society may bring to the surface historical contents and experiences which will "allow us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematising thought" about the dual nature of Canada "is designed to mask" (Foucault 1980: 82).

Multiculturalism establishes a framework of social opportunity and allows for an alternative and more complete historical archive to be produced composed of multivocal voices, positioned in different places on the cultural horizon. Consequently, what is theoretically privileged in the recognition of (ethno)cultural knowledge(s) and practices is the legitimacy of racial and ethnic "cultures of otherness" as categories which are organized by society around discursive and empirical fields of social difference (Hall 1985).

Acknowledgement of different logics, cultural, and social practices shifts around old unitary ways of thinking, as well as gives us a "working contact with a variant subjectivity" (Geertz 1986: 119). Geertz eloquently writes about this in his essay entitled "The Uses of Cultural Diversity" (1986):

"It is the asymmetries . . . between what we believe or feel and what others do, that makes it possible to locate where we now are in the world, how it feels to be there, and where we might or might not want to go. To obscure those gaps and those asymmetries by relegating them to a realm of repressible or ignorable difference, mere unlikeness, which is what ethnocentrism does and is designed to do . . . is to cut us off from such knowledge and such possibility: the possibility of quite literally, and quite thoroughly, changing our minds" (Geertz 1986: 114).

Have Canadian multiculturalism policies changed our minds? In looking at the past and present intellectual contexts, interconnections and contradictions between and within the Multiculturalism Act and the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy and their institutional sites and practices, the body of

evidence initially indicates that while both policies enable the organization, positioning, and public representation of ethnicity within Canadian society, they simultaneously constrain its scope and limit its expression (by marginalizing it within specialty services and dedicated projects).

The Canadian multiculturalism case teaches us that there is a difference between the formal organization and acceptance of cultural and racial diversity and actual ethnic and racial toleration. The Multiculturalism Act and policies have indeed promoted positive definitions, objectives, projects, and broadcasting undertakings to further the public recognition and acceptance of ethnic and racial **pluralism** in Canada. On the other hand, the social marketing of multiculturalism through various promotional and broadcasting strategies, through the deliberate teaching of cross-cultural toleration, and through heritage "development" projects generated by ethnocultural communities has revealed a surprisingly superficial understanding of the basic principles of cultural and racial **toleration** in Canada.

Endnotes

¹ In this paper, the term "ethnicity" is used as a category which describes: a) people who share a unique culture and who have undergone a common cultural socialization in that mother culture; and b) people who identify with an ancestral group who have shared a distinct culture, but who have themselves been brought up or moved to another culture (Isajiw 1977: 77).

For further clarification, the terms "ethnic" and "ethnocultural minorities" are used in this paper to refer to those peoples whose ancestral country of origin is outside of North America. "Visible minorities" refers to peoples of colour, who with the exception of aboriginal peoples, also originate from ancestral territory outside of North America. "Aboriginal" refers to those original peoples of Canada whose ancestral homeland is in North America.

² This is by no means an uncontested shift - the Québécois and others are not at all content with the public characterization of Canada in this manner. It is, however, one into which a lot of federal political energy and

publicity monies have been invested and would not be easily reversible.

³ As noted in the text, this paper will not be dealing with aboriginal communications. Even though the federal policy assumes inclusion of aboriginal peoples under the rubric of multiculturalism, I have chosen to restrict the paper to ethnocultural and visible minority groups that are NOT aboriginal because the two groups themselves draw a distinction in their claims and rights based on ancestral occupancy of Canadian territory. In the area of communications, the federal and provincial governments have both dealt with aboriginal and ethnic broadcasting policies and practices as distinct and separate entities as well.

⁴ In the case of the Ethnic Broadcasting Policy, this looks less explicit in that it appears as if ethnicity has become ghettoized onto specific "ethnic channels", i.e. that the ethnic stations inserted into the overall system will account for the "ethnic" portion of content balance in the Canadian broadcasting system structure. Contrary to this, however, the presence of the ethnic broadcasting policy and experiences to date have focussed public attention on the lacuna within the broader system and has mobilized some audience support for opening up the conventional services to fairer representations of ethnic and visible minority groups.

⁵ While recognizing the psychological impact of the state's efforts to provoke acceptance of multiculturalism, it is important to note the possibility that multiculturalism programs may degenerate into mere tokenism and ethnic folkloric activities (Ibid.: 290). There are many examples of this, such as the increased public representation of ethnocultural and visible minorities in Canada Day and other national holiday celebrations or the way in which the Canadian government expresses its international distinctiveness by highlighting aboriginal and ethnocultural symbolism at exhibition sites such as World Fairs or the Epcott Centre in Florida. The visible and audible portrayal of ethnicity in public life does contribute to a sense of participation in society on the part of minority groups, but it does not improve their material conditions or their institutional/structural assimilation into the economy. It has even been suggested by the cynical among us "that the concern with symbolic

distribution may . . . act as a substitute for policy on the distribution of material benefits (Ibid.: 290). In substantive terms, multiculturalism policy has not yet fulfilled its promise of "Equality Now" at the institutional level.

⁶ At the present time in Canada, employment equity laws are restricted to federal government bureaucracies, Crown corporations, federal agencies, and companies contracted to do business with the federal government, all of which must have over 100 employees. These include the CBC/Radio Canada, the NFB, the CRTC, Canada Post, among others, which (in 1990) are only beginning to organize the framework for implementation of the law.

Works Consulted

- Anderson, Alan B. and James S. Frideres. **Ethnicity in Canada - Theoretical Perspectives**. Toronto: Butterworths, 1981.
- Angus, Ian (ed.). **Ethnicity in a Technological Age**. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988.
- Applebaum, L. and Hébert J. (Department of Communications). Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. **Summary of Briefs and Hearings**. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1982.
- Armour, Leslie. **The Idea of Canada and the Crisis of Community**. Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1981.
- Berry, John W., Rudolf Kalin, and Donald M. Taylor. **Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada**. Ottawa: Minister of State for Multiculturalism, 1976.
- Breton, Raymond. "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," **The American Journal of Sociology**, Vol. 70, No. 2 (September 1964) 192 - 205.
- Brooks, Stephen. **Public Policy in Canada: An Introduction**. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1989.
- Brotz, Howard. "Multiculturalism in Canada: A Muddle," **Canadian Public Policy**, No. 61 (1980): 41-46.
- Canadian Association of Broadcasters. **A Broadcaster's Guide to Canada's Cultural Mosaic (Programming Opportunities and**

- Community Relations).** Ottawa: CAB, 1988.
- Canadian Council on Social Development. **A Guide to the Charter for Equality-Seeking Groups.** Ottawa: Court Challenges Program of the CCSD, 1987.
- Canadian Multiculturalism Council. **Report of the Canadian Multiculturalism Council 1985 - 1987/Rapport du Conseil Canadien du Multiculturalisme 1985 - 1987.** Ottawa: Canadian Multiculturalism Council, 1987.
- Canadian Multiculturalism Council. **Reflections From the Electronic Mirror: Report on the National Forum of Multiculturalism in Broadcasting/Les Media Electroniques, Miroir de la Société? Rapport du forum national sur le multiculturalisme et la radiodiffusion.** Toronto: May 13 and 14, 1988.
- Caplan, G. L. and F. Sauvageau. **Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy.** Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1986.
- CRTC. **Ethnic Broadcasting: Public Hearings.** Ottawa: Information Services, 1985.
- CRTC. **A Broadcasting Policy Reflecting Canada's Linguistic and Cultural Diversity.** Ottawa: CRTC Public Notice 1985-139. 4 July 1985.
- diNorcia, Vincent. "Ideas of Canada", **Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory.** Vol. VIII: No. 3 (Fall 1984): 146 - 150.
- Dutt, Shyla. **Canada's Cultural and Racial Diversity - A Challenge for Broadcasters: A Background Paper.** Prepared for The Forum on Multiculturalism and Broadcasting. May 1988.
- Foucault, Michel. **Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 - 1977.** Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980.
- Geertz, Clifford. "The Uses of Diversity," **Michigan Quarterly Review** (Winter, 1986): 105 - 123.
- Glazer, Nathan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. **Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City.** Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963.
- Government of Canada. **Broadcasting Act.** 1967-68, c. 25, s. 1.
- Government of Canada. **An Act to Amend the Immigration Act, 1976 and to amend other Acts in Consequence Thereof (Bill C-55).** October 21, 1987.

Government of Canada. **Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Bill C-93, Chapter 3I)**. 21 July, 1988.

Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post - Structuralist Debates", in **Critical Studies in Mass Communications**. Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1985, p. 91-114.

Hudson, Michael R. "Multiculturalism, Government Policy and Constitutional Enshrinement - A Comparative Study", in **Multiculturalism and the Charter: A Legal Perspective**. Toronto: Canadian Human Rights Foundation, 1987.

Isawjiw, Wsevolod W. **Definitions of Ethnicity**. Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1979.

Kallen, Evelyn. "Multiculturalism: Ideology, Policy and Reality," **Journal of Canadian Studies** Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1982): 51 - 63.

Kovacs, Martin L.(ed.). **Ethnic Canadians: Culture and Education**. Regina: University of Regina, 1978.

McLeod, Keith A. **Multiculturalism, Bilingualism and Canadian Institutions**. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979.

McNulty, Jean. "Technology and Nation-Building in Canadian Broadcasting," in R. Lorimer and D. Wilson (eds.). **Communication Canada: Issues in Broadcasting and New Technologies**. Toronto: Kagan and Woo Limited, 1988, p. 176 - 198.

Multiculturalism Canada. **Visible Minorities and the Media: Conference Report**. Ottawa: Multiculturalism Canada, 1982.

Multiculturalism Canada. **Multiculturalism and the Government of Canada/Le Multiculturalisme et le gouvernement du Canada**. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1984.

Porter, John. **The Measure of Canadian Society - Education Equality and Opportunity**. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. **A Preliminary Report**. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1965.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. **Book I. General Introduction - The Official Languages**. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. **Book IV. The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups**. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969.